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THE

MISSIONARY DELINQUENCIES

OF THE

CHURCH.

A PAPER READ AT THE MISSIONARY CONVENTION OF THE SYNOD OF MICHIGAN, 1879.

By the REV. FRANK T. BAYLEY.

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THEY are very great: they are criminal before God: they indicate an alarming condition of the Church and they threaten, nay, they have already worked, a woeful crippling of the cause of Christ on earth.

It is our solemn duty, as servants of Christ, to contemplate these delinquencies, to estimate their measure, to enquire after their causes, and, with penitent prayer and earnest effort, to seek their removal.

They can be rightly estimated and appreciated only in the light of these three facts, viz:

THE CALLING OF THE CHURCH.
THE NEED OF THE WORLD.
THE ABILITY OF THE CHURCH.

Consider then:

I. *The Calling of the Church.* It is a missionary calling. The Church is under a double bond to be missionary.

First.—It is to be like its Lord. It is named after Him, and His name is Love. "Who so loveth is born

of God; and he that loveth not, knoweth not God." Salvation, in its very essence, is an inspiration of love, —love to God, because He first loved us, and love to man for Christ's sake,—and for man's sake, too. The true Church, then, will love man—as did its Lord; and and since man is lost, it will seek man,—as did its Lord. Not to do so is to be recreant to Christ; to deny Him, by being unlike Him.

And, secondly, the Church has received a specific command to be missionary. Her ascending Lord committed to her a blood-bought gospel, in trust for the world. His last word to her bade her go into all the world and carry it to every creature.

Evidently, a Church that is not missionary is not Christ-like. It is unfaithful to His example, to His whole spirit, to His express command. It robs the world, disobeys a crucified Savior, and imperils its own life.

II. *Consider the need of the World.* Much has been accomplished: we have reason to thank God and take courage. Nevertheless, brethren, the present condition of the world is terrible. Altogether, outside even nominal Christianity, there are some 530,000,000 souls dwelling in the shadow of death. And of 383,000,000 nominal Christians,—Protestant, Roman Catholic and Greek —what a vast multitude are Christ-less! Even in our own land, behold how infidelity, indifference and sin abound; yet, we are all reckoned as nominal Christians.

The conclusion, awful, appalling as it is, it forced upon us, that more than 1,000,000,000 are now living on earth without Christ,—a number of which we can have no conception whatever. Surely the cry of innumerable souls unites with the bidding of the Savior in the missionary calling of the Church.

III. *Consider the ability of the Church.* Let us judge by a right standard. The question is not "what could the Church give as well as not"—"without feeling it," —tho' alas! even this standard would suffice utterly to condemn the Church. We have no right thus to estimate Christian ability. Let us remember, that we belong absolutely to Christ. "Ye are not your own." Surely, He has a claim upon more than the gleanings of His own vineyard. All that we have is His; it is a question of administration, only, when we ask, how much ought the Church to give. It is the Divine will that Christians should take proper self-care; that they should duly provide for all those varied interests which are committed to them personally and peculiarly. But after all allowance is made for every interest which ought to precede the claims of benevolence, it is most evident, that a very large benevolent ability remains with the christian Church. It may give, if it will, a great sum into the Lord's treasury.

Think of the aggregate property and income of the church members of the United States,—*all* belonging to Christ *in fact*, and by the vows of Church membership; and all to be used for Him, whether in eating and drinking, in caring for dependent interests, or in missionary contribution. Think of the resultant revenue were that property, or even that income, taxed systematically, at even one per cent. for missionary purposes! It is, of course, impossible to estimate with any exactness the real financial ability of the christian Church, or to say what sum that Church might give and ought to give in missionary consecration. But we may be aided to judge both of the ability, and the delinquency of the Church in this direction, by some comparisons, to which I ask your attention.

Is it too much to say, that the christians of the United States should give *as much* in proportion to their numbers as the *converted heathen?* The very suggestion of such a standard seems an insult and an absurdity, —does it not?

But let us apply it! The native churches of the Friendly Islands had, in 1868, 8613 members. In 1870, these churches gave $17,500 to send the gospel to other tribes.

The church members in the Harpoot (Turkey) field number 1188. Nearly all the churches sustain themselves, and they have contributed within the three past years for general christian work $17,037.

The native Church at Hilo, Sandwich Islands, raises yearly $1200 for Foreign Missions and has sent 12 of its members as missionaries to Southern Polynesia.

From 1865–1875 the churches of the Sandwich Islands contributed over $50,000 to Foreign Missions; and they have sent out, from first to last, over 40 of their members as missionaries to Micronesia.

In the Missionary Herald—organ of A. B. C. F. M. —for June 1879, among acknowledgments of Receipts, are these items: From four missionary Churches—contributions of oil, $343.67. (They are not the first who have brought oil to Christ!) From the Churches on Mortlock Islands, proceeds of shells sold, $75. From eight Churches among the Zulus, these amounts respectively: $20.21, $25.18, $24.35, $61.64, $20.45, $38.35, $38.17, $9.74; a total from the eight churches of $238.09. The 5000 christians in Samoa gave in a single year $1500 to the British and Foreign Bible Society. The missionary Churches in Asia contributed to christian objects in 1875, $45,000. The contributions in the Central Turkey Mission alone, were over $10,000.

In Naniwa, Japan, is a church two years old. It had 35 members, until it sent out a colony of nine last January. Its money contributions last year were $240, —of which about $60 was used outside their own expenses. Dr. Bushnell told us at Synod last year, that the church at Corisco, Africa, gives $300 a year in gold to Missions, remembering even the Freedmen of the United States. And when asked how many members it had, he replied, "it has less than a hundred."

The Minutes of General Assembly for this year give the Church at Gaboon, Africa, a membership of 84 and credit it with a contribution to every one of the Boards, aggregating $418.38.

We may well ask, if these new-born souls of Turkey, of Japan, of the Pacific Isles, of Africa, can give so much out of their poverty—but they are rich—how much can the Christians of this favored land contribute? If this is *their* standard, what should be *ours?*

Our resources, our abilities are certainly incomparably greater. Is our giving in proportion? A few facts may help us to judge.

But just at this point I wish to enter a caveat. I am about to appeal to statistics: such a method of comparison seems the best available. But objections are often raised against this use of statistics, on the ground that they are not absolutely correct, and the force of them is often sought thus to be evaded. I am aware of the imperfection of these statistical reports, that some churches, practically dead, appear on the roll; that some benevolences are not reported to any Board or to the General Assembly. Nevertheless, brethren,—the figures represent an *approximation* to the truth. This is all that is claimed; this is enough for our purpose. Let us be candid, as before God, not seeking a shield against the truth.

There are 5415 Presbyterian churches on the roll of our General Assembly. 1823 of them contributed *nothing* to Home Missions; 2489 of them gave nothing to Foreign Missions—nearly one-half of the whole number. We are to remember, of course, that many of our churches are feeble, many very poor, indeed. But are they poorer than the christians of Africa, of tax-ridden Turkey?

And the lack is by no means confined to churches feeble in number, or resources. As, for instance, in 1878, one church of 380 members gave to all the Boards, $13; one with 288 members, $29; one with 1219, gave to Home Missions $100, and to Foreign Missions $200. Four churches in St. Louis gave $\frac{9}{10}$ of a cent, per member, daily; four in Pittsburgh, $1\frac{8}{9}$ daily; four in New York, $2\frac{1}{2}$ cents daily. The average of sixteen large churches, with 8240 members, for all the Boards, was $6.24 a year, per member, about $1\frac{2}{3}$ cents a day. The little church at Gaboon, Africa, poor as to this world's goods, gave in 1877, to Foreign Missions within $31, as much as the Indianapolis churches, (excluding their women's work, not reported,) and more than three times as much as the five churches in Toledo, with their 1285 members.

The Gaboon and Benita churches gave more than the whole Synod of Columbus, more than the Presbytery of Maumee, with 2960 members, more than the Presbytery of DesMoines, with 2953 members, and more than the Presbytery of Mattoon, with 3349 members.

But let us apply this standard of the converted heathen to the churches of our own Synod.

The church in Gaboon, Africa, gave to the Home Mission Board last year, $35. Only eleven churches in this Synod gave as much,—only five outside the Detroit

Presbytery. Gaboon gave $230 to the Foreign Mission Board. Only eight Presbyterian churches in Michigan gave as much; six of them in the Presbytery of Detroit.

The highest average per member among our churches, according to last year's Report of the Synod's Committee on Benevolence, which Report is based on the receipts acknowledged by the Boards, was $4.79. The average per member in the Gaboon church was $4.98. The one, the average of a church of 644 members, in Detroit, aided in their benevolences very greatly by a wealthy congregation outside the church membership; the other, of a church of 84 members, in Africa, with very little help, if any, from a sympathizing congregation! And yet, this church in Detroit, that looks so small in comparison with the church in Africa,—was the banner church of our Synod. If we blush for it, in the comparison, surely we should hide our heads for ourselves! There were last year but *nine churches* in this Synod reported as giving to all the Boards more than $2 per member; only *sixteen more* as reaching $1 per member; thirty-five as giving less than 25 cents per member; and forty-six are reported as having given not one cent to any of the Boards.

And the Gaboon church does not stand alone as our accuser before God. Nine churches in Hawaii gave in 1870, $4.10 per member for the mission in the Marquesas Islands. There are ten churches connected with the United Presbyterian Mission in Egypt. The Report of that mission for 1874 shows an average contribution of $5.87 per member.

What shall we say to these things, brethren? We ought to be *ashamed* of *congratulating* ourselves upon *reaching* an equal standard of Benevolence with con-

verted heathens: but we may well be *overwhelmed* at finding ourselves *so far beneath* it.

But let us estimate our giving from yet another stand-point. Cannot the christian Church afford to give, may we not expect to find it giving, as much, in proportion to its members, as the world gives for its pleasures, even for its pleasant vices?

Let me suggest a few comparisons. During September 1878, the Government received for the sale of Revenue stamps for whiskey in Chicago, $560,555. The Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions received last year, including legacies, $425,482,—a difference of $135,000 in favor of whiskey! The Cincinnati Gazette gives the amount paid in that city last year for liquor and beer as over $9,000,000. The total Benevolences of the forty-nine churches of the whole Presbytery of Cincinnati, as reported in the Minutes of the Assembly, including the Miscellaneous, were $27,316. John McCulloch played at the Detroit Opera House last September. The receipts for a single evening were nearly $1500. The seven Presbyterian churches of Detroit are credited in the Minutes of the General Assembly with contributions last year to Home Missions amounting to $4576,—about three times the receipts of one theatre for a single night. At the recent walking match in New York, the receipts for six days were about $75,000, —as much, within $7000, as the whole Presbyterian Church gave to the cause of Education last year.

The Mapleson Opera Company recently completed a two weeks' engagement in Chicago, and during that time took nearly $60,000. The churches of our Assembly gave last year for work among the Freedmen $43,000.

The receipts of the Board of Sustentation last year

were $17,379,—only $2000 more than the receipts of a single retail candy counter in Detroit, as certified to me by the man who keeps it.

And we cannot escape the terrible logic of these facts by pleading that they are isolated and exceptional, chosen to give a fictitious force to special pleading. If you feel that comparisons upon a larger scale would be more truthful and more favorable, I commend to you the following.

The Government tax on tobacco in New York State for 1876 was $7,040,985. All christian denominations in the United States gave about $1,500,000 that year to Foreign Missions.

The Internal Revenue receipts for tobacco in 1876 in the whole United States were $39,795,339. The whole christian world gave about $6,000,000 to Foreign Missions.

Do Missions pay?—or is it tobacco! which?

Look at another comparison. Dr. Young, the Chief of the United States Bureau of Statistics, estimated the cost of liquors consumed in the United States in 1867 at $600,000,000; and the consumption has largely increased since then. Think of it, brethren! *The United States expends annually for intoxicating drink 400 times as much as all its churches, of all denominations, give for christian work in Foreign lands*—$600,000,000 against a million and a half; *and 100 times as much as the whole christian world contributes to Foreign Missions.* Six hundred millions against six millions:—the one the revenue of the Juggernaut of Strong Drink,—the other the revenue of the Savior who died that men might live!

The total annual contribution of all the churches of the United States, for both Home and Foreign Missions, is about $5,000,000.

That is less than our *drink bill* for *three days!*

Brethren, let us judge ourselves, lest we be judged of God! Surely we are condemned, not only by the gifts of the very heathen to their new found Christ, but even by the offerings which the world brings ungrudgingly to the idols of its pleasures and the demons of its lust. And if these condemn us, what shall we say of the love of God in Christ! He bids us make this our standard: "freely *ye have received*," He says: "*freely give.*"

Brethren, did I speak too strongly in affirming that our missionary delinquencies are *great*, *criminal* and *alarming?*

Is it any wonder (in view of such delinquencies) that our ears are filled with the cries of appeal and protest from causes that are dying of starvation? That we hear on every hand of empty treasuries and increasing debts and crippling retrenchments? That our Board of Publication reports a debt of $8,800, the Board of Education a debt of $9,561, the Board of Relief a deficiency of $14,699, the Board of Home Missions a debt of $26,451, though appropriations are cut down 25 per cent., and the Board of Foreign Missions a debt of $62,532? What shall we do to be saved, and to save the church from the sin and curse of this apostacy? The question should press on with us with an awful solemnity.

Before we can answer it we must know the causes which have produced this lamentable condition. Diagnosis should precede and indicate prescription.

And the diagnosis of this sad case is clear. It requires no special wisdom to discern, among the chief causes of our present condition, three things: *Ignorance, lack of method in giving, and spiritual indifference.* Only the first of these will be considered in this paper.

With only individual exceptions, gross ignorance concerning missions, both Home and Foreign, prevails;

ignorance of the origin, the history, the practical workings, the actual results, the needs, and the promise of Missions; in a word, ignorance of the whole subject. This is true of even our Christian congregations and our contributors, to a great degree.

Knowledge is not inborn, even, on the subject of benevolence and missions; it must be gained through external channels. And how largely are these used, even in our churches? There are missionary books, various and excellent. But in how many home libraries are they found? how often do we see them on the centre table, or in hand? Then there are the missionary magazines,—certainly they ought to diffuse a great deal of missionary intelligence; doubtless—in the same sense in which an excellent school ought to educate the children who never attend it.

Out of a number of statistics bearing in the same direction, I commend these to you as samples. Out of a Presbyterian church membership of over half a million, the Foreign Missionary has about 900 hundred subscribers. *There are nearly two thousand churches, in which not a copy is taken, save that sent to the pastor.*

In January last there were taken in Detroit 35 copies; number of church members 2307! 66 were taken outside of Detroit, making 101 copies within the Synod of Michigan!

The Missionary Concert ought to be the source of a good deal of missionary education; but in a host of churches it is not observed, and in a multitude more, it is so managed as to be voted a bore, even by many who attend it.

Thus the vast majority of people are left dependent upon the scant and fragmentary missionary information of the religious papers, and the very infrequent missionary sermons of a very few pastors, for their knowledge of the missionary work of the church. What wonder that they *are* ignorant of it?

As both an evidence and a fruit of this ignorance, I would point you to many of the objections which are current against missionary work, especially against Foreign Missions.

The banker who gave his pastor $10 for the heathen, and $15 to get it to them, is a representative of a large class; many, but not all of them, uncandid.

They do not know, many of them would be glad to know, that the whole cost of administration in the American Board is but 5¾ per cent. of receipts, and in our own Foreign Board only 4¼ per cent.

Then there are the complaints, and worse still, the silent skepticism, widely prevalent as to the *results* of missionary work—especially in the foreign field.

Rev. Mr. Stevenson, in the Catholic Presbyterian (January, 1879) tells of a good man who had given to a mission for years, who professed profound astonishment when a missionary from that region told him that there were christian believers there!

Even christians and regular givers know almost nothing of the results of Foreign Missions.

They do not know of the redemption of the Sandwich Islands from universal thieving, from infanticide, from human sacrifice, from almost every heathen vice; of their elevation to such civilized and christian condition, that Richard H. Dana and other travellers could testify, that a man may travel alone, with money, in the wildest parts, unarmed; that a greater proportion of the inhabitants can read and write, than in New England, (I am quoting Mr. Dana's words,) and that, as Mr. Dana says, he found no hut without its Bible and Hymn Book in the native tongue; and the practice of family prayer and grace before meals is as common as in New England a century ago.

They do not know of the 55,300 souls received into the christian churches there during the fifty years' history of the mission, and that almost one-third of the

inhabitants were church members in 1868; they do not know that the native church has been self-supporting since 1870; that it raised over $200,000 in gold between 1865–1875 for the Gospel at home, and more than $50,000 for Foreign Missions,—taking the whole support of the Micronesian Mission.

They are ignorant of the marvellous transformation in the Fiji Islands, where, in 1835, the first Missionaries found the people cannibals, but where there were in 1874, 140,000 regular attendants on Sabbath worship—out of a population of only 200,000; 25,468 church members, besides 4,450 on probation; 946 native preachers and 1282 day schools, and where the native church has sent several missionaries from its own number to other islands.

They do not know that a single Missionary among Karens of Burmah, has planted 40 churches, gathered between eight and nine thousand worshipers, opened 42 houses of worship, 32 school houses and trained about 100 native pastors, evangelists and school teachers.

They have not heard of the work of God among the Shanars, a great tribe of former devil-worshipers in India, where now there are over 500 native preachers, where the native christians gave $20,000 in gold for religious purposes in 1866, and where a single missionary during 20 years labor has received 3500 converts, and seen them destroy 54 devil temples and build 64 houses for christian worship.

They are not aware of the testimonies of such men as Sir Bartle Frere and Lord John Lawrence, concerning the influence and results of christian missions in India; nor of the increase of the native christians there from 138,731 in 1862 to 224,161 in 1872; 85,000 in ten years, more than 20,000 of whom were Hindoos of high caste.

They have not heard of the christian work in forty walled cities and 360 villages in China, which was shut

against all christian labor but so little time ago; of the 400 native preachers there and of the increase of the native christians from 351 in 1853 to more than 13,000 last year.

They are ignorant of the work in Madagascar, where the Mission began less than 60 years ago, and where, in spite of a 25 years' persecution of the fiercest sort, there are now 3900 native preachers and 67,729 communicants in christian churches,—and of the Presbyterian Mission in Mexico—South and Central—begun only about six years ago, which has organized 22 churches, received more than 3000 members, and established a theological school with 18 regular attendants.

Of all these things, and of many more like them, they are ignorant; and they wonder if Missions pay!

Then there is the common objection, often *held* when not *uttered*,—that missions *cost* too much. This, too, grows out of ignorance; for any man who knows the facts would be utterly ashamed of the statement or the thought.

Think of it! the total cost of the American Boards' Mission in the Sandwich Islands from its beginning until it was turned over to self-support, was $1,220,000! Think of its results! the whole nation reclaimed from the vilest depths of barbarism; civilization built up, a literature created, schools, and even colleges, instituted, —to say nothing of spiritual results, which only God can estimate,—and the total cost—less by $800,000 than the cost of A. T. Stewart's recently built hotel in New York—and only $220,000 more than the cost of Dr. Hall's new church on 5th Avenue!

The total expenditure of the American Board for 55 years did not exceed the cost of 150 miles of railroad in Massachusetts and was less than the capital stock of either of half a dozen railroads leading out of Chicago.

The cost of an iron-clad monitor is much larger than the yearly cost of our own Foreign Board. A full cavalry regiment in the Army of the Potomac cost in wages, rations, clothing and forage, over $600,000 a year. Our Foreign Board makes great, but fruitless efforts, to bring its annual receipts up to $500,000.

And as to the popular expenditure for tobacco and liquor,—we have already seen that either item utterly buries out of sight the total expenditures of the whole christian church in benevolences of every sort.

Why, brethren, the force of these facts is *tremendous!* If they were only *brought to bear*, it would be *irresistible!*

But *they are not* brought to bear: The people only know that they are asked from time to time to put into a box or a basket money, which they never see or hear of again; and that is very discouraging business; it makes giving seem like a dead loss.

Human nature being what it is, men will not give cheerfully or liberally unless they are interested; and they cannot be interested unless they are informed. The expansive forces of beneficence can only be generated by the fire of zeal; and that can be sustained only as it is supplied with the fuel of facts. Even the shavings of emotional appeals are almost worthless, if left alone; they can only produce a fitful blaze that soon dies out.

Certainly, brethren, this point of diagnosis clearly indicates the appropriate remedy. We must *educate* the people if we are to have a missionary revival. The facts must be laid before them, impressed upon them, burned into them; they must be made to *see* and then they will begin to *feel* and to *act.*

I do not propose to speak of the particular methods of putting up or administering this prescription. I can only stop to impress the necessity of its administration. And let me inquire in all frankness and love, if we do not, some of us, need to take a good dose of

the medicine of knowledge ourselves. Like minister, like people: the missionary information and zeal of a congregation cannot be expected to go beyond those of its pastor. And I verily believe that there is a lamentable and culpable ignorance of missionary matters on the part of many pastors.

Pardon me, dear brethren, if I speak amiss. I only appeal to your individual conscience in the sight of God.

I confess with shame and sorrow, that I was a pastor for a time, and trying in a perfunctory way to stimulate the benevolence of my people, while yet I was myself grossly ignorant of the missionary work of the Church. The Lord looked on me and I was ashamed and repented; and, having been, I trust, soundly converted to the *pursuit* of missionary knowledge, (I count not myself to have *attained*) — I would fain strengthen my brethren.

I appeal to you, ministers and elders, of the church God; I appeal to you in the name of a crucified and reigning Savior. Is not a missionary revival a great and crying need, both of the world and of the church? And is it not our solemn duty and blessed privilege, first to obtain it in our own hearts, and then by the grace of God, to bring it to pass among our churches? Should we not draw near to the Cross to-day and, realizing afresh what Christ has done for us and for the world, consecrate ourselves anew to Him and to His work? And should we not labor and pray unceasingly for the missionary education and consecration of the entire Church of Christ?

"*Then* shall the earth yield her increase" of souls; "and God, even our own God shall bless us. God shall bless us; and all the ends of the earth shall fear him." "All the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God."